

E-Learning: promoting professional and personal transformation

SCOUT REPORTS

Working eight hours a day, five days a week would be a luxury for most Department of the Army employees. For example, Fort Gordon's Staff Sergeant Jasonica Crawford attests to the long hours worked by Army personnel. "My day starts at 4:00 a.m., I'm at work by 4:45 a.m., and I don't get off sometimes until 6:00 pm," Crawford said.

The Army workforce's workload is demanding, and it needs its personnel to demonstrate the dedication shown by Crawford in order to successfully accomplish its mission. Yet dedication alone won't prepare the Army for the future. Training and education play a critical role in arming Army personnel with the professional and personal knowledge to succeed in the wars of today and tomorrow, as well as in their careers and personal life. Until recently, the question that Army commanders and personnel faced was not whether training was important, but rather, "when can we fit it in?"

In order to answer the question, the Army created Army e-Learning, the latest component of the Distributed Learning System. Army e-Learning offers every active duty Soldier, Army Re-

servist, ROTC cadet and Department of Army civilian employee free access to more than 2,000 commercial web-based information technology, business, leadership, and personal development courses from anywhere with an internet connection. The Army wants to invest in continuing its employees' professional development, and by providing online courses, Army personnel can continue their education and training from their current location within their existing schedule.

Crawford lives the Army cliché, "We do more before 9 a.m. than most people do all day." She serves as an instructor at the Army's Basic Non-Commissioned Officers Academy in Fort Gordon, Ga.. Ironically, while she's responsible for helping extend training to students, her demanding schedule made personal education difficult. Army e-Learning changed that.

"Army e-Learning is helping me reach my professional and personal goals," she said. "When I have time, I sit down and take a course through Army e-Learning. It's very easy. Some courses are voice synchronous and walk you through the lessons, others you read at your own pace. I've learned a lot from Army e-Learning on topics as diverse as business, information technology, human resources and information assurance."

The Army is actively promoting Army e-Learning for personal and professional use. In fact, just over a year ago, the Army's CIO/G6 sent a directive instructing all Army organizations and major commands to use Army e-Learning to satisfy workforce information technology requirements.

"To date, more than 213,000 users have accessed Army e-Learning, and the numbers continue to rise at a rate of 300-500 new users each week," said Stan Davis, project officer for Army e-Learning. "Army e-Learning provides one stop shopping for IT training using the most up-to-date commercial applications industry has to offer.

"An Army Audit Agency report dated February 25, determined that over the last three fiscal years, the Army has saved approximately \$86 million. In fiscal year 2004, Army soldiers and civilians completed over 159,000 courses, resulting in an estimated savings of \$47.6 million dollars. Assuming a constant rate of savings over the next three years, the Army would save an additional \$142 million."

The Army's aggressive approach to training its

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those who rely on old technology will be passed by. With access to Army e-Learning, that won't happen to me. I've probably taken 25 to 30 courses thus far and have no intention of slowing down."

Herbert's use of Army e-Learning hasn't been for the sole purpose of professional development. He uses the system for business and personal development too. "I design and build amateur radio equipment, write my own software programs using HTML and XML and design Web sites. I'm also a published writer," Herbert said. "This is all possible because of the free classes I'm taking through Army e-Learning. It's definitely a tremendous perk for all Army

employees, and I'd encourage everyone to take advantage of it."

Army e-Learning doesn't stop at the boundaries of professional development. It goes a step further – offering courses that assist employees with managing personal finances, balancing life, time management and more. While most organizations prioritize their training dollars based on job-specific training, the Army is covering the full spectrum.

Davis strongly believes that Army e-Learning can play a positive role in the lives of each and every Army employee. In Davis' opinion, "The Army asks its people to dedicate their heart and souls to their jobs, and they do. In return,

we have a deep responsibility to them. We have the obligation to provide Army personnel with the tools they need to succeed in their personal and professional careers within the Army and beyond. Army e-Learning is helping make that possible."

The Army is transforming the way it does business and an important factor is educating its workforce. For additional information on how to access Army e-Learning, log onto www.us.army.mil; My Education; Army e-Learning portal page. You can also access Army e-Learning at usarmy.skillport.com. You must have an AKO account to access the system.

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network provider for primary care and spend more than one hour's travel time for network specialty care. If the access standards are not waived, students may still make use of TRICARE Standard.

To learn more about TRICARE Prime portability and split enrollment, visit the TriWest Healthcare Alliance web site at www.triwest.com or the TRICARE Management Activity site at www.tricare.osd.mil. TMA's web site also shows which TRICARE contractor provides services in the area where your PCS will take you or where your student goes to college.

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